

Town of Newington, Connecticut

**A Strategic Master Plan
for the
Parks and Recreation System**

Adopted

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Executive Summary

Newington – A Community Unlike Others

Since its founding in 1871, the Town of Newington has occupied a unique space in central Connecticut. Its geographic location, when coupled with the hometown, neighborhood feeling almost defines Newington and sets it apart from the nearby, larger, more urban neighboring communities.

Its location is not the only aspect of the Town that contributed to its uniqueness. Even over time Newington maintained its desirability as a community until this day where people want to live, raise families, and remain throughout their lives. The Parks and Recreation Department, which recently celebrated its 50th anniversary, is recognized as one of the best departments in New England and contributes to what makes Newington such a special place. The Department has long enjoyed a reputation for service to its residents and innovation in its approaches to those services.

However, change happens everywhere and while many of the changes have been subtle in Newington, change occurs all the same. Newington is currently and will likely grow at a slower pace than its neighboring communities and the rest of the State due to its geographic boundaries. Similar to the rest of the State and the country, Newington will grow older and Newington is likely to grow older in ways different from other communities as it appears as if it is the preference of residents to remain in Newington throughout one's life. This will result in Newington being home to several, distinct segments of older adults.

One of the over-riding purposes of a strategic master plan is to examine the changes within the community, and also the subtle changes in focus and direction that park and recreation facilities, programs, and services have taken.

The implementation of the Newington Strategic Master Plan will maintain Newington Parks and Recreation position of eminence among its peers regarding the quality of its parks, facilities, programs and customer service. Expected outcomes include a Town with:

- An increased sense of community and community pride;
- Healthy and active residents;
- The worthy title "Lifetime Sports Community;"
- Sustainable recreational resources
- Green spaces and trails throughout the community; and
- Future economic viability

The plan document should reflect these strategies, actions and outcomes.

The plan is comprehensive in scope and details several diverse recommendations ranging from improvements to the delivery of park and recreation services to the development of major facilities. Each recommendation may have several action steps that could take the next five years or longer to implement.

These recommendations have resulted from conducting a wide-ranging set of analytical activities. Activities included detailed analysis of demographics; meeting park neighbors at ice cream socials; examining the turf and soil on ball fields; calculating field usage capacity; and a myriad of other activities outlined within this document. The following recommendations are highlighted because of the impact they will have on the community.

Management Improvements to Recreation Program and Maintenance

The processes for much of the program registration, revenue analysis and accounting, and maintenance cost histories were found to be inadequate. With relatively low-cost and simple solutions, the plan identified the needs for an automated recreation program management system, an automated maintenance management system and the transition of one clerical position (from an existing vacancy) to one providing administrative analysis and reporting of the automated data collected by the new systems.

Maintenance Workload Imbalance

Evaluation of the Park and Grounds Division clearly showed an existing and growing maintenance deficit. A maintenance deficit is a condition where the maintenance resources are not capable of providing sustainable maintenance for the physical assets. The result is that Town's assets deteriorate at a rate faster than the expected life of the assets. A number of plan recommendations offer opportunities to balance the workload and the resources. Actions are needed to at minimum, eliminate the maintenance deficit. The maintenance debt may need capital funds to address park facility replacement needs in the future.

Marketing Plans for Programs and Services

Although the Department offers numerous and varied programs, little is known about the customers that are served, or those that are not being served. Further, the Department has conducted little research to determine the potential demand from special needs groups such as active older adults, teens, people with disabilities, or those with differing cultural norms and mores. All of these groups and the other interested residents will benefit immensely from the development of a marketing plan and strategies to learn about and address the resident recreational needs.

Replacement of the Mortensen Community Center

The majority of long-term residents of Newington have used the building housing the Mortensen Community Center as part of the town's high school or more recently as the Community Center. The building is now old and has a number of structural problems. The current areas are not handicapped accessible unless the Town Hall is open and has limited space consisting essentially of a gymnasium and a few classroom.

Action is needed in the short term to ensure that these recreational facilities are available in some form for the resident's recreational use. Whether this involves a major renovation, reconstruction, replacement or a new facility is a decision the Town needs to make in the near future. All residents from young children to the growing number of older adults will require more extensive space and more specific equipment to address their needs. Naturally, having a gathering space for the community where people of all ages and interests can come together and interact builds upon the sense of community, an asset so valued by residents.

Installation of Synthetic Turf Surface

There are few issues in public parks and recreation that generate as much interest as does availability of athletic fields for the various sports and user groups. Newington has a strong sports presence; a limited outdoor playing season; and poor soils incapable of providing quality fields under the current demand for use. The addition of new sports; new groups of participants; and the trend for playing sports year round rather than during the sports traditional season exacerbate this situation. The solution that provides the greatest cost benefit and user access is for Newington to install a synthetic turf surface. This would most likely be located at the Clem Lemire Recreation Area.

Replace Mill Pond Park Swimming Pool

Another facility that has existed since most resident's first memories is the swimming pool at Mill Pond Park. The expected life of a pool of this type is about 50 years. Both Mill Pond and Churchill pools are beyond 40 years old and any major repairs are not cost effective. While the town has the use of Mill Pond Pool it is recommended that the pool be replaced with a mixed-use pool. Such a pool would have recreational water features such as slides, flumes and similar features sometimes found at larger water parks. The pool could also have a sprayground for young kids and a 6-lane 25-yd lap/competition pool.

Redesign the Churchill Park Pool and Recreation Facility Complex.

Although Churchill Pool is only five years newer than Mill Pond it is still 42 years old and also has exceeded its life span. Both of the pools have been suffering from a variety of problems in recent years. The occurrence of leaks; the aesthetic quality of the pool deck, change rooms and other facilities as well as changing trends in pool usage have resulted in

fewer and fewer users to the pools. The decision needs to be made regarding the viability of the Churchill Pool. The consultants are recommending the pool be closed and replaced with a spray ground and improved volleyball, basketball, tennis and barbeque facilities.

Upgrading and Revitalizing Neighborhood Parks

One of the unexpected results of the socials held in several neighborhood parks was the number of older adult residents who brought their adult children and grandchildren to the park on those evenings to share with us memories and potential for these pockets of green and sense community created within their neighborhood. Over the years, the increase in maintenance demands coupled with scarce resources has resulted in the neighborhood parks deteriorating. Part of the viability of Newington as a community is tied to the perception of the neighborhood parks. Neighborhoods do change and as such, it is important and appropriate that these areas are upgraded and revitalized in such a way to meet the needs and preferences of the neighborhoods in which they are located. The recommendation is to systematically revitalize each of the neighborhood parks and find ways of providing sustained maintenance support.

Preservation of and Resident Access to Open Space

Natural and open space is a diminishing resource in many areas throughout the country and the same is true for Newington. A high priority should be placed upon preserving the existing open space for environmental, aesthetic, and passive recreation uses. The connection of green spaces and trails throughout Newington will address each of the six desirable outcomes listed previously. The goal is to make Newington a “walkable” Community.

Conclusion

Although many of the recommendations in the Plan require a cost in staff time rather than dollars, it is impossible to ignore the fact that the recommendations listed above and others will have a significant cost to implement. The precise dollars involved will depend on the development decisions that are made by the community and Newington’s leaders. In that process, however, the consideration should be given to the fact that the least expensive part of a facility is its development cost. A facility with an expected life of 40 years will cost four times as much to maintain as to build. This also assumes that the facility is built to a high quality. The Town has reaped significant benefit from the fact that both Mill Pond and Churchill Pools were well designed and properly constructed. The consultants recommend that the Town determine what facilities they want and then develop a budget to meet the need. This process, known as “Budget to Build,” is in contrast with the process of “Build to Budget,” which frequently increases long-term cost.

Another consideration is the perspective on the dollars required to complete the projects. Most communities today recognize that high quality parks and recreation facilities and amenities are an important element of a resident's perception of their quality of life. Parks and recreation is usually among the top three reasons people give for selecting places to live and work. Because of the value that parks and recreation have to the quality of life and the economic viability of the community, the expenditures on parks and recreation should be viewed as an investment rather than an expense.

The Park and Recreation Strategic Master Plan attempts to focus attention on those investments that need to be made and recommend management practices and policies that will optimize the use of resources in providing the facilities and delivering the services that the residents of Newington seek for the future of their community.

NOTES

Introduction

Plan Purpose and Approach

The Town of Newington, as part of a 2005 town and departmental management planning process, defined the mission and the vision for the parks and recreation as it relates to the facilities, services and programs offered to the residents. The Park and Recreation Department is actively seeking to implement several strategies to carry out the mission and progress toward the vision. The Parks and Recreation Strategic Master Plan was contracted to assist the Parks & Recreation Department in positioning and realigning their available resources to most effectively implement these strategies. The strategies, along with projected outcomes and proposed actions by the consultants were as follows:

Strategy A. Provide services that are essential to the livability and economic health of the community.

Outcome A. Identify a list of outcomes deemed desirable by residents and stakeholder groups that establish priorities for future planning and action. Create an associated list of programs, services, parks and facilities that address those outcomes as determined through extensive consultation with the community

Activities Related to Strategy and Outcome:

- Ongoing contact with and feedback from Strategic Master Planning Committee
- Interviews with key stakeholder groups such as Town Council, Park and Recreation Board, School Department personnel, and business community
- Focus groups with community leaders, specific park and recreation stakeholder groups, users, and non-users of park and recreation services
- Community surveys garnering insight and preferences from residents via the town's web site, local placement of surveys, and seasonal brochure placement
- Public meeting at the onset of the plan to determine preferences and priorities and public meetings towards the end of the process to reaffirm perceptions and preferences

Strategy B. Create a balanced, accessible, and integrated system of open spaces, facilities, and recreation opportunities that serve current and future residents, businesses, and visitors.

Outcome B. A Comprehensive list of open space, parks, trails and greenways, facilities, and recreation opportunities that reflect the needs and preferences of the various groups of current residents with specific directions for future development and service delivery based upon demographic projections, lifestyle changes, and priorities established by the community.

Activities Related to Strategy and Outcome:

- Review and identify park and recreation implications of demographic information and projections
- Designate specific target market segments within the community of Newington and specify leisure opportunities related to each segment

- Incorporate lifestyle patterns and preferences into leisure opportunity recommendations
- Determine impact and influence of emerging trends within offerings
- Incorporate information, insights, and priorities gathered through key stakeholder interviews, focus groups, community survey, and public meetings

Strategy C. Develop aggressive and sustainable funding sources that support the Department's capital and operational needs.

Outcome C. Adopt policy and strategy that defines levels of support for the various functions of the Park and Recreation Department vis-à-vis other demands for municipal resources, fiduciary requirements and resident demand for facilities and services.

Activities Related to Strategy and Outcome:

- Review of current facility condition, for maintenance requirements
- Facility capacity to support revenue generation
- Available and potential lands capacity to meet the needs of the community
- Sustainable sources of funding for operations and maintenance
- Opportunities for capital development that reduce the demand for public funding of new development

Strategy D. Address the feasibility of developing/ improving recreational activities and amenities in neighborhood parks.

Outcome D. Provide recreational activities and amenities in the neighborhood parks that reflect the makeup of the neighborhood while incorporating the important benefits-based goals for the quality of life priorities of the community

Activities Related to Strategy and Outcome

- On site observation of usage preferences and social patterns existing within each neighborhood park at different times of day, different days of the week, and different seasons of the year
- Intercept surveys of various user groups within each neighborhood park
- Incorporate information generation from the two previous activities, develop a list of benefits and opportunities appropriate for each particular neighborhood park
- Hold a series of neighborhood gatherings to discuss the suggested benefits and opportunities to gather input and insight from neighbors
- Develop concept plans for each neighborhood park based upon information gathered and feedback garnered. This includes areas such as the pools.
- Analyze how it meets current and future needs.

Strategy E. Identify land use areas available for future recreational and park needs.

Outcome E. Develop a future recreational and parks need proposal that establishes priorities and recommendations for use of land currently owned by the Town and lands for potential acquisition that support the recommendations of the Strategic Master Plan

Activities Related to Strategy and Outcome

- Determine the priority needs for the Town over the next five-year period.
- Identify the available and feasible lands that may be available for meeting the recreation or open space needs

- Evaluate the lands according to their viability to accommodate existing demand and needs
- Make priority recommendations for existing town-owned properties
- Review type, size, location, physical attributes, and accessibility of park, open space, or recreational opportunity areas that do not currently exist within the public land holdings as determined by inventory and recommendations within the Strategic Master Plan
- Make priority recommendations for future acquisitions for park, open space, trail, or recreational opportunities to address community needs and future demographic shifts as determined through the planning process

Newington Master Plan: Outcomes

The implementation of the Newington Strategic Master Plan will return Newington Parks and Recreation to a position of eminence among its peers regarding the quality of its parks, facilities, programs and customer service. Expected outcomes include a Town with:

- An increased sense of community and community pride;
- Healthy and active residents;
- The worthy title “Lifetime Sports Community;”
- Sustainable recreational resources
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- Future economic viability

The plan document should reflect these strategies, actions and outcomes.

A Community Unlike Any Other

Every community regardless of its size or geographic location is unique unto itself and naturally Newington is no exception to this rule. While it is always difficult to grasp the intricacies of such uniqueness, demographic statistics and other information related to the purchasing patterns of Newington’s residents may help to fill in the picture.

This section will include pertinent information in the following areas:

- Demographics: Similarities and Differences
- Lifestyle Profiles
- Patterns and Preferences

Demographics: Similarities and Differences

Rate of Growth

Newington, likely due to its geographic boundaries, is growing at a rate of 6.0%; a slower rate than the rest of the United States, the State of Connecticut, and Hartford County at 13.1%, 13.6%, and 12.4% respectively.

Mobility of Residents

Newington is clearly a community where people reside for an extended period of time. Nationwide the percentage of people living in the same house between 1995 and 2000 was 54.1% while 67.2% of the Newington residents have been residing within the community since 1990 with 19.3% living in the community since 1969 or earlier.

Maturing Population

The nation as a whole is becoming older. The proportion of Newington residents ages 65 and over is 18% while the percentage for the United States, State of Connecticut, and Hartford County is 12.4%, 10.6%, and 9.5% respectively. When you combine the aging of the population with increased life expectancy and improved health conditions, this leads to sub-segments of older adults in Newington that relate to life experience and physical and mental health as well as the standard age groups.

These include the following:

- 10.8% of the population 75 years of age and over
- 23.2% of the population between the ages of 55 and 74

Therefore, the total 55 and better age group segment represents 34%, or one-third of the Town's population.

Families and Households

Newington's family-friendly community image has long been the primary attraction for people who chose to move to and remain in Newington. In the past couple of decades changes have occurred to the family profiles, which now include a number of non-traditional family structures as well:

- Only 22.2% of the population reflect the traditional married couple with children living at home with them
- A larger proportion of households consist of 1 person at 26.8%
- 10.7% are households headed by a female

Diversity

As a nation we have become more diverse ethnically with the increased diversity rising in various geographic and urban pockets throughout the country. Overall percentages on the basis of race for the United States are as follows:

White Persons	75.1%
African American	12.3%
Asian	3.6%
Latino	12.5%

In Newington, the percentages for each groups are 92.5, white; 2.1% African American; 2.8% Asian; and 3.7% Hispanic or Latino of any race.

Newington is much less diverse than the country with the majority of the increase in diversity coming from the under 18 population.

Upper Middle Class Community

A review of the data related to income clearly places a majority of the Newington residents in a fairly comfortable financial range such as:

- 36% of the households with incomes between \$50K to \$99K
- 25% of households earn between \$100 and \$149K
- 14% of households with incomes \$150K and over

There is a segment of the population that have lesser economic means as 15% of the households have incomes less than \$35K with 4% making less than \$15K

Lifestyle Segments

Lifestyle segments have long been a means by which businesses and organizations are able to create a picture of their target markets, customers, or residents in a way that goes beyond basic demographic descriptors. These lifestyle segments created by ESRI, Claritas, and others combine the demographic data with behavior patterns and preferences and through cluster analysis create lifestyle segments. In this instance, ESRI data was used to identify the lifestyle categories for Newington.

While there are 91 different lifestyle clusters within the United States, there are 8 of those segments that best describe the residents of Newington.

The Big 4

There are 4 lifestyle segments that compose **75.2%** of the Newington population. In general, they are slightly older and financially better off than the population of the rest of the country and are settled in both their personal and work life. The segments include the following:

In Style – 26.2%

This is the largest lifestyle segment residing within Newington and they share some interesting characteristics, patterns, and preferences such as...

- they live in the suburbs but prefer a more urban lifestyle
- consist of mainly professional couples
- slightly older than average median age of country
- well educated with professional jobs
- almost equal number of married couples with children and childless households
- median age is 39.3 years

Prosperous Empty Nesters – 19.8%

This group represents 20% of the population in Newington and is likely the slightly older version of the “In Style” group mentioned previously. Patterns and preferences include:

- generally ages 55+
- in transition from child-rearing to retirement
- still working in well established careers
- long time residents of their neighborhoods
- value physical and financial health
- median age is 47.2 years

Cozy and Comfortable – 18.1%

While this group is not as affluent as the previous two groups, they are characterized by some of the following characteristics:

- middle aged, married couples without children or with school aged or adult children

- employed in a wider range of occupations from professional to managerial to service
- not in any great hurry to retire
- house and home is important to them
- median age is 41 years

Pleasant-Ville – 11.1%

This group is the most affluent of the four groups that compose the majority of Newington residents.

Other characteristics include:

- married couples with children
- settled, happy, and enjoy living in the community
- more likely to commute longer distances to work
- median age 39.4 years

The Other 20% of the Newington Population

Three additional segments make up **21.3%** of the population in Newington. These three groups while comfortable financially are less affluent than the majority of Newington residents.

Main Street USA – 9.8%

This group represents a greater variation in living patterns and includes the following characteristics:

- reside in mixed housing types
- consist of varied household patterns, married couples, singles and shared householders, and single parents
- income level is considered comfortable but not affluent\
- active, involved, do it yourselfers
- median age is 36.3 years

Rustbelt Retirees – 5.8%

Do not let the label assigned this lifestyle group mislead you. While many of these lifestyle segment individuals live in the rust belt area of the United States, there is strong representation in the Northeast as well. Some of the characteristics of this group include:

- generally married couples with no children at home
- single and often living alone
- many within this group are 65+ years of age
- not inclined to move
- hardworking, loyal individuals
- median age is 43.8 years

Retirement Communities – 5.7%

The label assigned to this group does not mean that they live within established retirement communities, but rather that they are people who are retired and prefer to remain in a community setting. Patterns and preferences include:

- dominated by singles and people living alone
- income slightly lower than the U.S. median income
- good health is a priority

- prefer activities associated with more traditional seniors
- median age is 50.7 years

Very Small Segment

For those of you who are totaling the percentages, you will notice that there is a small segment missing. This group is referred to as the “exurbanites” and while they make up a very small percentage of Newington residents, they are included for your information. Characteristics of Exurbanites (3.5%) include:

- generally empty nesters living on the urban fringe
- caught between paying for college and aging parents
- financial security is a priority
- well educated and well employed
- pursue active recreation options
- median age is 43.6 years

Important to Note

There are 12 categories of affluence included within ESRI lifestyle profiles ranging from 1 being the highest and 12 being the lowest. Fifty-five percent (55.4) of Newington residents fall within the 2nd highest level for affluence including: Pleasant-Ville, In Style, and Cozy and Comfortable representing 55.4% of the community

The 5th of the 12th category of affluence within Newington consist of Prosperous Empty Nesters, Rustbelt Retirees, and Retirement Communities representing 31.3%

Nearly 10% (9.8) of residents fall within the 10th of 12 levels of affluence, Main Street USA, and one group within the top rung category consisting of the 3.5% of the residents within the Exurbanite lifestyle segment.

Patterns and Preferences

There is data tracked across the United States that create levels of patterns and preferences among residents of various communities. In this instance, using ESRI data related to MPI which is Market Potential Index we can report the measures for the relatives likelihood of the adults in Newington as they exhibit certain consumer characteristics, behaviors, or purchasing patterns.

The MPI index is based upon a scale of 100 indicating the average across the United States. Listed below will feature the levels for Newington that are over 120 which reflect a greater likelihood of consumer patterns.

Participation: Sports and Leisure Market Potential among Newington residents:

Participated in Golf (124 rating)

Walking for Exercise (120 rating)

It was of interest to note that the majority of activities fall within the 110 to 119 rating range and consisted of outdoor activities including: backpacking/hiking, biking, boating, downhill skiing, golf once a month, swimming, fishing, and roller blading.

Attendance: Sports and Leisure Market Potential among Newington residents:
(within the last 12 months unless specified differently)

- Attending ice hockey game (135)
- Attending live theater (131)
- Gambling in casino, 6+ times (128)
- Gambling in Atlantic City (127)
- Went to the beach (124)
- Attending baseball games (120)
- Dining out 2 -3 times per month (120)
- Visiting Epcot Center (125)
- Visiting Magic Kingdom (123)
- Visiting MGM Studios (122)

Areas of attendance within the last year that fell within the 110 to 119 range included attending: basketball game, college football game, golf tournament, soccer game, adult education course, auto show, dance performance, dine out once a month, horse races, gambled in Las Vegas, movies, museum, music performances, live theater

Other Areas of Participation:

The only behaviors in this area that exceeded 120 rating related to membership as follows: union, 129, fraternal order, 122, and charitable organization, 121

Activity areas within the 110- 119 range included: bird watching, board games, indoor gardening, photography, reading, surfing the net, and playing video games.

Big Picture Trends with Potential Impact Upon Parks and Recreation

What Will the Future Hold?

What will the future of parks and recreation be? That's a good question, but one that is challenge laden. The amount of time and money available for discretionary pursuits as well as the nature of those choices will reflect the changes within the world in which we live. So the better question would be "how will the world change and evolve over the ensuing years and influence the lives of people?" This query leads us to the real area of our interest in parks and recreation; another good question with no absolutes. "How will these changing patterns and preferences unfold suggesting possible role(s) parks and recreation will play in the future as well as the needs and interests of people.

Park and recreation trends don't spring out of nowhere. Rather than reflect the myriad of shifts and changes within society and the world that ultimately make a difference upon how people live, work, learn, and play. It is these types of changes that will be used to develop a list of possible directions, challenges, and opportunities for the field.

The changes used as a basis for these projections will include the following:

- **People: Who Will We Be?** Who we are today and how will the demographic changes and social and behavioral shifts related to changing demographics and other environmental factors change the faces of our world.
- **How and Where Will We Live?** Where will we live? Will there be different parts of the country growing in population and popularity while other regions decrease? How will we live? Will we be more likely to live alone or in larger, extended groups of friends and families?
- **External Factors.** There are a myriad of external factors, often referred to as environmental factors, that shape and influence people's lives, organizations, and society as a whole. An overview of some key factors includes economic, legal, political, science and technology, and others

Once that information is cited, a list of challenges, opportunities, and suggestions for the field are identified.

Trends are like wild horses. It's easier to go with that direction.

Naisbitt

Who Will We Be?

Just who will we be in the future? What will the similarities and differences among our population be? The most concise descriptor include 4 words: *younger, older, more diverse*.

The United States like most of the developed nations is an aging society and when the aging of the population is coupled with extended life expectancy the percentage of the population aging and the diversity related to health and independent living ability among that aging population will increase as well. Our population becomes older as childbearing rates are expected to remain low at about the same time that baby-boomers begin age.

As a nation, we will become younger as well and certainly more diverse. The younger population currently is more diverse than previous American generations and the increased diversity when

Census Close-Up

- From 2000 to 2050, the numbers of the non-Hispanic, white population is projected to increase from 195.7 million to 210.3 million representing an increase 7 percent. However, this group is projected to actually lose population in the 2040s that would result in non-Hispanic whites being 50.1 percent of the total population in 2050, compared with 69.4 percent in 2000
- Nearly 67 million people of Hispanic origin (who may be of any race) are projected to be added to the population between 2000 and 2050. Projected growth is from 35.6 million to 102.6 million, an increase of 188 percent. Their share of the nation's population would nearly double, from 12.6 percent to 24.4 percent.
- The Asian population is projected to grow 213 percent, from 10.7 million to 33.4 million. This would double their proportion of the population from 3.8 percent to 8 percent.
- The black population is projected to increase from 35.8 million to 61.4 million in 2050, an increase of about 26 million or 71 percent. That would raise their share of the country's population from 12.7 percent to 14.6 percent.

(Census Bureau: <http://www.census.gov/Press Release/www/releases/archives/population/001720.html>)

combined with the higher birth rates attributed to some of these groups along with ongoing immigration will account for the older, younger, and more diverse categorizations.

By 2016, we'll be in the throes of demographic shifts that will upend our political, economic, and technological priorities and redefine our markets.

Zolli

Ethnic Diversity

The most common reference to diversity generally refers to ethnic differences in our population. The Census Bureau tracks current patterns and makes projections related to how the diversity within our country will change and grow. Following with that “more diverse” label identified as one of the four words describing our future, the population as a whole will become less white and more diverse with particularly large increases in the proportion of people who are of Hispanic origin and Asian.

Ethnic Variations

Some other interesting patterns have been developing. There also appears to be disconnects related to proportions of diversity spread throughout the United States with large number of various ethnic groups represented in only certain parts of the nation while other segments of the country remain largely untouched by growing diversity. For example, the percentage of foreign born individuals living in the United States counted in the last Census was 11% while the percentage for California and New York were 26% and 20% and at the other end of the spectrum were states similar to Vermont and South Dakota with foreign born percentages of under 4% and under 2%.

Changes in Life Stages

Even the projections of the changing demographics will not fully paint a picture as to who people will be and what their lives will be like in the future. Due to a myriad of factors, the ages and behaviors traditionally associated with various life stages in the industrial era have changed and are continuing to evolve. The changes include what it means to be a child, an adolescent or even a senior citizen.

Various Faces of Aging

Getting older in America is a life stage that is changing in a number of different ways. As the baby boomers move through this life stage it is a near certainty that they will change this life stage just as they have every other one they've experienced. The leading edge of the baby boomers turned 60 in 2006, which in turn will mean that this cohort group will begin turning 65 in the not so distant 2011. Some of the factors to keep in mind about the changes in aging include:

- The old become even older as the percentage of Americans age 85 and older becomes one of the fastest growing groups

- The values and attitudes of the baby boomers' parents and the baby boomers themselves are very different and will seriously influence preferences and behaviors related to leisure pursuits
- The maturing baby boomers are changing the definition of what it means to be "old" as they strive to remain healthy and active
- A common adage circulating is that "60 is the new 40" or even 30 as baby boomers pursue health and vitality to maintain a youthful outlook
- This new generation of older adults will not retire in the traditional manner as many of them continue to work for financial reasons or the need for health insurance as well as desires for socialization and mental stimulation
- Memberships in health clubs among the 50+ generation as well as participation in senior softball programs continue to grow
- Many retirement community developers have already begun building in non-traditional sun belt areas as many of the new older adults will age in place

Changing Dimensions of Childhood and Adolescent

The older life stage is not the only one that has changed. The traditional behaviors and expectations of childhood, adolescents, and young adulthood have changed as well as previous aspects of these three life stages have blurred to a certain extent. Children now play a large role in family purchasing decisions even influencing purchases of higher priced cars and vacations. Young adults are now spending more time residing with parents rather than flying from the nest to live independently. Some of the observations and projections about these life stages include the following:

- Children seem to become "older sooner" due to the heightened pace of physical maturing, the growing concerns for personal safety, and the increased level of responsibilities they assume for food preparation, etc. due to working parents.
- The life stage of adolescence has become increasingly longer. Teens and young adults take longer to leave home, marry at later ages, and spend more time in college or employment searches.
- According to KidsCount funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, one of four young adults in the United States is "at risk" for not making a successful adult transition. Imagine the impact of almost 25% of our population not being able to support themselves financially or emotionally.

The increasing diversity of roles and expectations within these previously distinct life stages will significantly influence the actions and activities of discretionary time preferences. The "at risk"

identification of a sizeable portion of young adults will become a growing concern to all and a potential opportunity for public parks and recreation.

Haves and Have-nots

The term “haves and have-nots” has been one that people have used frequently over the last few decades and the term is generally perceived as referring to those people who are wealthy and those who are not. In this instance, the aspects covered within this term has expanded and grown more diverse as well. “Haves and have-nots” can refer to wealth, health, social support, and other aspects of the human condition. Consider, if you will the following variations within this term:

- Increased mobility among society results in the children of aging parents not necessarily living in close proximity of parents limiting the amount of ongoing support these older adults receive
- The aging of the population as well as medical advances can lead to an increasing number of individual with limited mobility
- The variations in working patterns has created a number of new categories including over-worked, under-worked, unemployed, and under-employed
- The rise in single parent households reduces the amount of social and emotional support available for both the adult and children in these households

Beyond Geographic Location

The excitement of the 90s with the rebirth of America’s cities may have been a bit premature. While the relocation of young professionals and empty-nest suburbanites has occurred, it is not as widespread as initially projected. People still prefer to cluster around major metropolitan areas and in close proximity to the coast line or bodies of water.

An additional shift in geographic location preference is being caused by the aging baby boomers who are redefining retirement and in many instances are choosing to “age in place” in their original homes and/or in close proximity to children and grandchildren

How Will We Live

The size of households has gotten smaller in this country as the number of people living alone has risen. There is likely to be some interesting shifts in this category as the aging of parents and the traditions of new cultures in this country may give rise to more extended family living situations with three generations under one roof. At the same time, the number of non-family households may grow and become more varied as aging non-related, single baby boomers form households for economic and social reasons and immigrants entering this country through the more traditional coastal gateways find that they need to put a number of families under one roof to survive.

Many Americans were shocked when the Census Bureau announced that if current patterns continue that before the end of the next decade unmarried adults will be the new majority for living

arrangements in the United States. These living arrangements are varied as some people are living alone, others are unmarried households such as single parents, while others are unmarried partners or adult relatives living together.

Environmental Factors

Factors external to individuals and organizations are referred to as “environmental” and include such focus areas as economic, socio-demographics, public opinion and policy, science and technology, and competition.

Each of these focus areas could be addressed through individual volumes of information. In this instance, general shifts or changes will be highlighted. It is also important to note that changes or directions in one area can significantly influence or impact other environmental factors.

Economic Factors and Trends

Factors within this category influence the amount of time and discretionary income people have for recreation and leisure as well as the types of experiences they need or choose to pursue. Some of these factors include:

- Shift to a global economy creating economic impacts and work shortages as we re-configure to a service and value-added economy
- The end of the industrial era work agreement where people worked for the same company for a life-time and were provided with benefits upon retirement will redefine or end retirement as we know it
- Americans are working longer and/or working more than one job and this leads to less time for recreation as well as increased levels of stress

Legal/Political

The role and changes within public opinion and resulting public policy are certain to play a significant role in our future in parks and recreation. While the terms legal and political are often used together when conducting environmental scans of public policy, there are differences. Legal refers to actual laws and regulations while politics refers to the process of and attitudes towards various aspects of governing.

Just some of the changes and trends within this area include:

- heightened interest on the part of people on acquiring and protecting open space
- along with increased public support for such expenditures
- growing and varied concerns upon environmental/global well-being
- concerns over the growing federal deficit
- impact of various other areas of public expenditures, i.e. justice services, health care expenses, social security obligations, etc.

Science and Technology

The progress within the closely related fields of science and technology have significantly enhanced and changed the ways in which we live, work, learn, and play in this country. There are a number of changes in this area such as:

- increased longevity as Americans are living longer and healthier than ever before
- chronic diseases and obesity with both the quality of life and economic impact of dealing with the growth in these conditions
- impact of stress and its relationship to chronic diseases, obesity, and costs of health care
- connect and disconnect aspects of computers and the Internet as people spend more hours and energy interacting with machines and less time with actual face to face contact with people and nature
- the shrinking time that today's parents and children spend interacting

Implications for Park and Recreation Providers

Trends are actually of very little value unless the information they provide and the shift they suggest are put into practice. This section encompasses a brief Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis for the industry, suggested organizational changes, and methods for continuing to monitor trends as they develop.

SWOT Analysis

Let's give attention to the following questions:

- What strengths does the field bring forward with it as we proceed into the 21st century?
- Are there weaknesses within our industry as well?
- What will the emerging opportunities and challenges be that parks and recreation will encounter?
- While any list responding to these questions could be extensive, please review the following keeping in mind that only the most critical ones are included.

SWOT Analysis: Critical Look at Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats within the Future of Parks and Recreation

Strengths

Clean Air and Water
Public Places and Spaces
Universal Human Need
"our roots"

Opportunities

Important Societal Contributions
Health
Adult Transition
Independent Elderly
Building Community

Weaknesses

Credibility Gap
Direct Services
Activity over Outcome
Fees and Charges

Threats

Current Way of American Life
Competing Priorities
Escape and Entertainment
INspériences

Strengths

While individuals, organizations, and movements all have within them particular strengths, there are four areas of strength inherent within parks and recreation cited here. In the case of parks and recreation, these particular strengths are sometimes overlooked or not given the focus of consideration warranted:

- **Clean Air and Water.** People in general seem to appreciate and value having trees and green space as part of the public landscape, but the role of parks and recreation in procuring, protecting, and preserving as it relates the essential nature of life – clean air and water – is one of our strongest assets.
- **Public Places and Spaces.** People flock to the many public places and spaces that fall within the operational purview of parks and recreation. Where do people gather for concerts and community events? Where do our nation's youth pursue athletic competition? We are the keeper of the keys so to speak for these valuable community assets and can leverage their use to address critical social needs.
- **Universal Human Need.** Once the basic human needs for subsistence are addressed, the need to pursue growth, social interaction, and achievement are universal to all human beings across all life stages. We have long been associated with alternatives and opportunities for all age groups.
- **“Our roots”.** The profession of parks and recreation is rooted in the good deeds of individuals such as Joseph Lee, Frederick Law Olmsted, Jane Addams, and Luther Gulik among others. Just as these individuals recognized the critical needs of the society as we evolved from an agricultural to an industrial nation, the recognition and application of a return to our roots is essential to our future.

Weaknesses

All aspects of life have their soft spots or weak areas that can contribute to their downfall or certainly play a part in the lack of optimal success.

Credibility. In parks and recreation, one of the most ongoing and critical weaknesses holding us hostage is the lack of understanding that people and society have about the value of our services. This will remain our Achilles' heel even though we are continuing to make progress in this arena.

Additional aspects that may somewhat be related to this lack of credibility and understanding is our late 20th century reliance upon direct services, our preference for activity over outcome, and the proliferation of fees and charges

Direct Service. The focus upon providing direct services consumes significant amounts of resources including staff time and facility capacity and continues our focus upon individuals rather than society overall.

Activity Over Outcomes. Park and recreation professionals seem to possess a strong preference for activity and action. It comes as no surprise when decision-makers call upon park and recreation departments to undertake an unusual request or address an emergency situation because we seem to have an internal compass that seeks out action. This can be a weakness as it takes away from an emphasis upon important community and societal outcomes.

Fees and Charges. There is nothing inherently wrong with people paying to use certain facilities and participate in various activities. The weakness within this area centers upon the over-reliance parks and recreation has created upon fees and charges as well as the lack of differentiation between what are essential services that should be available at no or low cost and those opportunities that should carry with them a break-even or even revenue generation price tag.

Opportunities

One should never be discouraged or misled by the weaknesses or threats to parks and recreation because the current situation facing individuals, communities, and society overall at this time bodes well for our future contributions. While there are a number of challenges facing society, these challenges are in actuality opportunities for our industry.

Health. Health encompasses a myriad of issues such as clean air and water, overweight and obesity, and stress reduction and substance abuse among others. It is the unique role that parks and recreation can play in assisting people in finding positive pursuits and past times that support the overall health of a community and society that will be of great value.

Successful Adult Transition. A look at high school drop-out rates is only one indicator that leads to what leaders in the greater Los Angeles refer to as “social dynamite”. Social dynamite is a fairly descriptive term that brings to our attention that as many as one of every four young adult in the United States is “at risk” of making a successful adult transition (KIDSCOUNT). Parks and recreation can assume a powerful role in helping this group acquire needed skills and relationships to ensure their future.

Independent Life Stage of Elderly. What is society to do with the large number of older Americans not to mention the large groups of aging adults following on their heels? A review of current expenditures and projected services strongly suggests that as a society we may not be able to afford growing old in this country. Research is beginning to emerge that strongly suggests that involvement in physical activity, social interaction, mental challenges and new experiences among older Americans will contribute to their ability to remain healthy and live independently for most of their years. Parks and recreation is a core service provider in those areas.

Building Community. Americans in the past decades have become a mobile society. People no longer necessarily marry someone who lives within 3 blocks of their childhood home just as grandparents may live thousands of miles from their grandchildren and adult children who could potentially serve as care takers for them. There is evidence that suggests that being anonymous

within a community leads to greater incidences of juvenile crime and lower turnout for elections and public debate. The very fabric of a society is its ability to bring people together to recognize common aims. While this is a critical issue in a values-divided America, it also represents an opportunity for parks and recreation.

Threats

One of the underlying assumptions of planning is that if you can identify the threats to your situation, that you can dissipate those threats by co-opting them as opportunities. If only it was that straightforward. The threats listed in this instance include those that will greatly challenge the assets and abilities of this profession and include:

Current Way of Life. Prescriptions for mood altering medications continue to climb. The amount of time Americans spend commuting increases as well. Quality family time decreases while weight increases and the blurring of work and life escalates. Americans from many segments of our society are caught in a seemingly endless trap of materialism, technology, growing debt, and health risks. At the same time, there are segments of our society who seem disconnected from this very way of life and become alienated from the mainstream.

Competing Priorities. While dealing with competing priorities such as police and fire are not new conditions for parks and recreation, it becomes apparent that the competition for public funds and support will escalate in the near future. Will the country assign scarce resources to youth or the older adult. What about the public policy promises related to Medicare and Social Security? It will come down to a serious, bottom-line driven agenda that will require parks and recreation to be well positioned for that future.

Escape and Entertainment. Money and “time” run neck and neck as being the most important commodity in this country. A look at how Americans are spending their precious discretionary time and money is most revealing. Americans are decreasing the amount of time being spent in outdoor pursuits while the time and money being expended upon fantasy sports and gambling is rapidly growing. It appears as if Americans either out of choice or lack of time are opting to pursue escape and entertainment over some of the more traditional benefits of parks and recreation.

INsperiences. Experiences relating to the inner-self plus those that take place inside the home. This could involve a panoply of activities that might induce an individual to avoid contact with others. Examples include game stations, internet, non-interactive volunteering and similar activities.

Organizational Changes

Parks and recreation organizations can no longer operate in the same ways that have proven successful for them in the past. McDonalds now serves salads and passes out pedometers. Several chain bookstores are experiencing remarkable success in this era of declines in reading by re-inventing itself as a “third place”.

Trends don't apply just to public policy and programs, but to the ways in which we conduct our operations as well. Some of those changes to be considered include:

From Full Service Provider to Facilitator

The shift from mass production to mass customization when coupled with the growing diversity of society means that one organization can not possibly afford to be "all things to all people". This will result in a number of other organizational shift as well including:

From sole provider of services to willing partner with other organizations to ensure opportunities for the many

From professionally-centered organizations where the employed staff deliver the majority of programs and services to participant-collaboration relationships whereby the department assumes a facilitative role by providing education and direction so participants can seek and satisfy their own personal goals

From Service Delivery to Transforming Society

The societal challenges and economic priorities of the country strongly suggest that parks and recreation in the public and nonprofit sectors can not survive in the future unless they move beyond "what they do" for individuals in favor of "what they make happen" for the good of society. Other shifts included within this change:

From activity centered to outcomes based with activities serving as the means to an important end for the overall well-being of society

From a nicety to a necessity is a mandatory change if we are to maintain public support for our efforts. With the challenges associated with the coming overweight generation often disconnected from their families, one another, and nature and the challenges of keeping 3 or more older generations healthy and vital members of the community, the need to be a part of transforming society is inevitable.

(O'Sullivan, Ellen. *Setting the Course for Change*. Ashburn, VA: National Recreation and Park Association. 1999. pp. 9-10)

Lands, Parks and Facilities

Newington Parks and Recreation Department (NPRD) has made wise use of community resources in their fifty years of operations. Programs and recreational opportunities for residents use facilities provided by the town, schools and some private and non-profit groups. The available acres for development of new park areas are constrained by the current level of development and the presence of wetlands through much of the town. Opportunities exist to upgrade current facilities due to their age and condition. In most cases these facilities can be replicated in the same footprint so new lands will not be required. In other instances the momentum for new facilities focuses on trails and active lifestyle activities that can make use of the wetlands without negative impact.

This plan element focuses on the physical assets that are managed and maintained by the department staff. The element identifies the supply of land, parks and facilities, including its geographic distribution and an overview assessment of its condition.

Classification

The Town of Newington Parks and Recreation Department is, in reality, a part of a larger park system that ostensibly provides for a varied set of recreational opportunities for its residents. Although not all elements of the system exist within the Town's borders, it is nevertheless, an integral part of the system.

A park, recreation and open space system covers a broad array of areas, facilities and services/programs. Generally speaking the system can be viewed as a spectrum of providers (stewards/managers/owners) that range from entirely public to entirely private. The sum-total of these providers comprises the "System" of leisure opportunities available to the residents of the jurisdiction. Examples include public parks from the Weir Farm National Historic Site, Hammonasset Beach State Park, Clem Lemire Park, to the YMCA and private providers such as Healthtrax Fitness and Wellness in Newington.

The Traditions of Classification

Historically the classification system grew out of the open space movement. Open space has been viewed as either active or passive. Passive open space was natural in character and encouraged activities such as walking, nature study, fishing, picnicking and similar. Active open space was used for sports and playgrounds, and eventually was defined as parklands.

Classification Purpose

The classification of parks and open space allows the grouping of similar spaces, facilities, activities and uses and distributes them equitably among the resident population through the adoption of standards. For example, the classification of Neighborhood Park can refer to spaces less than 10 acres in size; less than ½ mile in distance of intended users; and contains facilities such as picnic

shelters, athletic courts, playgrounds and similar. Characteristics such as size, distance from user, and design are generally part of the standards for the park classification.

Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classification Table			
Parks and Open Space Classifications			
Classification	General Description	Location	Size Criteria
Mini-Park	Used to address limited, isolated or unique recreational needs	Less 1/4 mile distance in residential setting	Between 2500 sq. ft. and one acre in size
Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood park remains the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. Focus is on informal activity and passive recreation	1/4 mile to 1/2 mile distance and uninterrupted by non-residential roads and other physical barriers	5 acres is considered minimum size. 5 to 10 acres is optimal
School-Park	Depending on circumstances, combining parks with school sites can fulfill the space requirements for other classes of parks, such as neighborhood, community, sports complex, and special use	Determined by location of school district property	Variable depends on function
Community Park	Serves broader purpose than neighborhood park. Focus is on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves two or more neighborhoods within a 1/2 to 3 mile distance	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually between 30 and 50 acres
Large Urban Park	Large Urban parks serve a broader purpose than community parks and are used when community and neighborhood parks are not adequate to serve the needs of the community. Focus is on meeting community-based recreational needs as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces	Determined by the quality and suitability of the site. Usually serves the entire community.	As needed to accommodate desired uses. Usually a minimum of 50 acres with 75 or more acres being optimal
Natural Resource Areas	Lands set aside for preservation of significant natural resources, remnant landscapes, open space and visual aesthetics or buffering.	Resource availability and Opportunity	Variable
Greenways	Effectively tie the park system components together to form a continuous park environment.	Resource availability and Opportunity	Variable
Sports Complex	Consolidates heavily programmed athletic fields and associated facilities to larger and fewer sites strategically located throughout the community	Strategically located Community-wide facilities	Determined by projected demand usually a minimum of 25 acres with 40 to 80 acres being optimal
Special Use Park	Covers a broad range of parks and recreation facilities oriented toward single-purpose use	Variable – dependent on specific use	Variable
Private Park/Recreation Facility	Parks and recreational facilities that are privately owned yet contribute to the public park and recreation system	Variable – dependent on specific use	Variable

Parks, Open Space, and Pathways Classification Table (cont.)		
Pathway Classifications		
Classification	General Description	Description of Each Type
Park Trail	Multi-purpose trails located within greenways, parks and natural resource areas. Focus is on recreational value and harmony with the natural environment.	Type I: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skates. Type II: Multipurpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians and bicyclists/in-line skaters. Type III: Nature trails for pedestrians, which may use either hard or soft surfaces.
Connector Trails	Multipurpose trails that emphasize safe travel for pedestrians to and from parks and around the community. Focus is as much on transportation as it is on recreation	Type I: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skates located in independent Rights-of-ways (ROWS) e.g., old railroad ROW. Type II: Separate/single-purpose hard-surfaced trails for pedestrians or bicyclists/in-line skates. Typically, located within road ROW.
On-Street Bikeways	Paved segments of roadways that serve as a means to safely separate bicyclists from vehicular traffic	Bike route: Designated portions of the roadway for the preferential or exclusive use of bicyclists. Bike Lane: Shared portions of the roadway that provide separation between motor vehicles and bicyclists, such as paved shoulders.
All-Terrain Bike Trail	Off-road trail for all terrain (mountain) bikes	Single-purpose loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.
Cross-Country Ski Trail	Trails developed for traditional and skate-style cross-country skiing	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas.
Equestrian Trails	Trails developed for horseback riding	Loop trails usually located in larger parks and natural resource areas. Sometimes developed as multipurpose with hiking and all-terrain biking where conflicts can be controlled.

In 1995, the National Park and Recreation Association published the classification table presented above. It represents NRPA's most recent thinking on classification of parklands and facilities.

Although not addressed as yet by NRPA, many specific purpose trail organizations have more detailed definitions of pathways as it relates to the types of use on the trails or roads. Similarly some of the advocates of greenways, natural areas and open space have more classifications with more detailed definitions of those areas as well.

Newington Park Classifications

Using the NRPA classifications, Newington's parks fall into the classifications shown below.

Neighborhood Parks

- Beacon
- Beechwood
- Candlwycke
- Eagle Lantern
- Little Brook
- Mary Welles
- Seymour
- Starr

School Parks

- Anna Reynolds ES
- Elizabeth Green ES
- John Wallace MS
- John Paterson ES
- Martin Kellogg MS
- Ruth Chaffee ES

The Neighborhood Parks are pretty evenly distributed throughout Newington. They were developed a number of years ago as model neighborhood parks with similar facilities that could serve the residents of each neighborhood. Typical facilities found in the neighborhood parks include, an open play area, basketball courts, playgrounds, trails and benches. None of the neighborhood parks have built restrooms.



Beacon Neighborhood Park

The School Parks essentially came about in the late 1960's as the Town and School District agreed to exchange use of the school grounds for general public park activities during non-school hours in exchange for the Town maintaining the grounds. Each of the school park areas has athletic facilities used by Town sponsored teams. The community can use the playgrounds, but they are not the Town's maintenance responsibility. The Town is responsible for basic landscaping and keeping the sidewalks and parking areas clear of snow and ice in the winter. The High School has several sports fields and its use by the community is oriented almost exclusively to sports. Therefore it was not included in the School Parks but below in the Sports Complexes. The one community-use facility at the High School is the indoor swimming pool.

Community Parks

- Churchill
- Mill Pond

Sports Complexes

- Badger Field
- Clem Lemire
- High School
- Mill Brook

Mill Pond and Churchill are quintessential Community Parks. With swimming pools, picnic facilities, tennis courts and similar type facilities these two parks are the focus of non-sports community activities and recreational use. Mill Pond features the accessible playground, the clay tennis courts; open play areas and the millpond itself with paddle wheels and other amenities. Churchill has sand volleyball, tennis courts and the Bob Stanley Nature Trail that allows the visitor to explore the wetland between Churchill and Clem Lemire Park.



Churchill Park

Clem Lemire Park is the Town's primary Sports Complex. While it totals approximately 67 acres in 3 parcels the vast majority of the land is in wetlands with a portion used for a construction materials landfill. Clem Lemire contains baseball/softball fields as well as a football field and the skate park.

Other Parks that can be classified as sports complexes include Badger Field and Mill Brook Park. Badger Field is only 4.2 acres and consists of a baseball diamond and supporting amenities. However, these are the only facilities available so as developed, it is more of a sports complex than a



Volunteer Field
Clem Lemire Park

park. Mill Brook Park is classified as a sports complex strictly because that is its only use. Mill Brook is used for soccer. Soccer fields of varying sizes can be lined out in the park, half of which is considered wetlands under state law. The park needs to be master planned with consideration given to other facilities, but it is not a high priority with all of the other needs in the community.

The High School is the premier Sports Complex in the Town, but the priority use is for the High School and thus the availability is constrained. The school grounds contain a variety of high school athletic facilities such as a football field with 400-Meter track, and two practice fields, a baseball field, two girls' softball fields, four soccer/lacrosse fields, one field hockey field and a bank of nine tennis courts. The indoor swimming pool is also used for swim meets for school and clubs.

Special Use Areas

Special Use Areas and Parks include the following:

Kellogg Eddy Historical House and the Kelsey Historical House

With the efforts of the community to preserve historic properties such as the Kellogg Eddy House and grounds and the Kelsey House, agreements were reached distributing responsibilities between the between the Town of Newington and the Newington Historical Society & Trust, Inc. The Town accepted the responsibility for maintaining the infrastructure. The Society is responsible for the collections. The society offers tours of the facilities as warranted. The NPRD offers the Kellogg-Eddy House for private rentals. During the agreement period, the responsibility for building maintenance has been the responsibility of the Newington Park and Recreation Department.

Deming Young Farm (Community Gardens)

The Deming Young Farm is also a historical property with a house that is under private renovation, some outbuildings in various states of repair and approximately 54 acres of land. The land is now used to provide the community gardens and in the winter cross-country ski trails are created around the perimeter of the property. The NPRD is responsible for mowing the open areas.

Mortensen Community Center (MCC)

The Mortensen Community Center has been operating since 1973 for the benefit of the Town's residents since the new high school was built in the early 1970's. The MCC has a gymnasium, arts and crafts room, music room and a Teen Center. The NPRD Pre-school is held in the arts and crafts room.

Senior and Disabled Center

Newington's first Senior Citizen's Club was formed in 1959. Today the Senior and Disabled Center offers a variety of opportunities to seniors and residents with special needs during the day. The NPRD provides a variety of programs for seniors and special populations as well. Some of these programs are offered at the Senior and Disabled Center.

West Meadow Cemetery

Although cemeteries are not frequently thought of as a park, many communities consider them to be open spaces and they provide a historical perspective on the community if creatively interpreted as a cultural resource. The West Meadow Cemetery was opened on the Kellogg-Eddy grounds in 1977

Newington Facility Supply Table

Park	Park Type	Acres	90 FT BB Fld	60Ft BB Fld	Softball Flds	Soccer FLD	Football Fld	Lacrosse	Field Hockey	Picnic Tables/Grills	Ponds	Paths	Playground	Basketball Court	Tennis Court	Volleyball Court	Parking	Restrooms	SwimmingPool	Trails	Open Play area	Skate Park	Running Track	
Totals		452.3	4	7	3	9	4	0	1	6	5	4	6	15	16	18	1	13	5	3	5	21	1	2
Beechwood	N	4.4								1			1	1						1				
Beacon Park	N	8.3							1			1	1	1						1				
Churchhill	CP	16.8			1	1			1	2	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1					
Badger Field	SC	4.3		1												1								
Candlewyck	N	4.9										1	1	1					1	1				
Clem Lemire	SC	67	1	2			1		1	1			1			1	1		1		1			
Eagle Lantern	N	6											1						1	1				
Little Brook	N	8.6											1	1						1				
Mary Welles	N	2.1		1					1					1		1	1			1				
Mill Pond	CP	33.3	1			2			1	1	1	1	1	1	4		1	1	1	1	1			
MillBrook	SC	15.1				1																		
Seymour	N	4							1	1		1	1	1						1				
Starr	N	4									1		1	1						1				
Young Farm	SU	54.3																						
Park Sub-Total		233.1	2	4	1	4	1	0	0	6	5	4	5	10	8	5	1	5	4	2	5	9	1	0
School																								
Anna Reynolds	SP	25.3		2									1	1	1		1				2			
Elizabeth Green	SP	13.5											1	2			1				1			
Emmanuel Academy	SP	5.7		1										1			1				2			
High School	SC	62.5	1		2	4	3		1				1		9		1	1	1		1		1	
Holy Spirit	SP	17.7																			1			
John Wallace/ John Paterson	SP	64.5	1										1	1	3		2				2		0.5	
Martin Kellog	SP	17.2				1							1	1			1				1		0.5	
Ruth Chaffee	SP	12.8											1	1			1				2			
School Sub-Total		219.2	2	3	2	5	3	0	1	0	0	0	1	5	8	13	0	8	1	1	0	12	0	2
N = Neighborhood		CP = Community Park			SP = School Park			SC = Sports Complex			SU = Special Use													

NOTES

Facility Distribution

Having adequate facilities to meet the needs of the residents is important. A significant consideration regarding supply is the effective geographical distribution of the facilities in the community. Some parks or facilities such as Mill Pond Park and the MCC are a one-of-a-kind facility and are centrally located. Other facilities such as playgrounds need greater distribution.

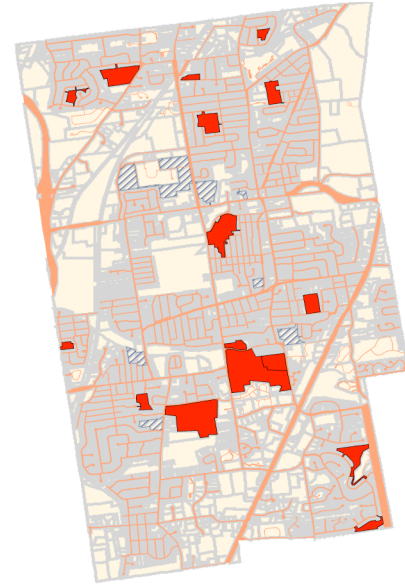
Playgrounds

As mentioned in the descriptions of facilities above the playgrounds can be found in most of the parks and some of the schools. This provides a relative good distribution of the playgrounds in relation to residential development in the Town.

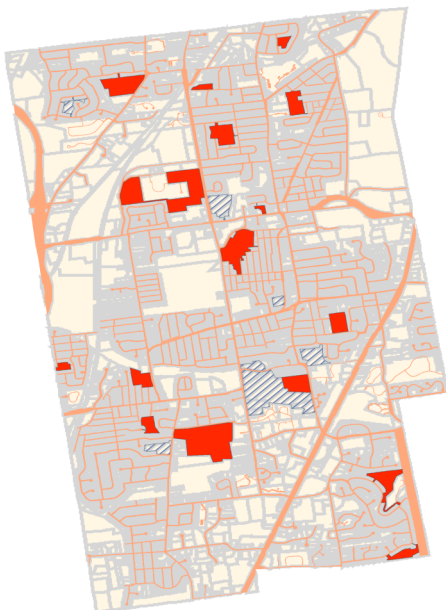
Courts

There is a limited distribution of courts with basketball courts the most widely distributed and the only volleyball courts located at Churchill Park.

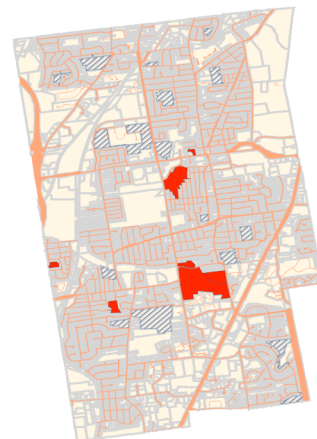
Tennis courts are also centralized with locations at the High School, Mill Pond and Churchill.



Playgrounds



Courts of all Types



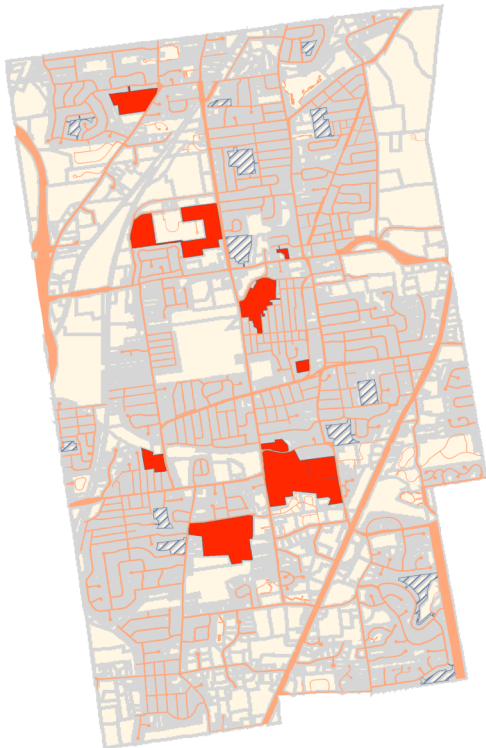
Picnic Areas

Picnic Areas

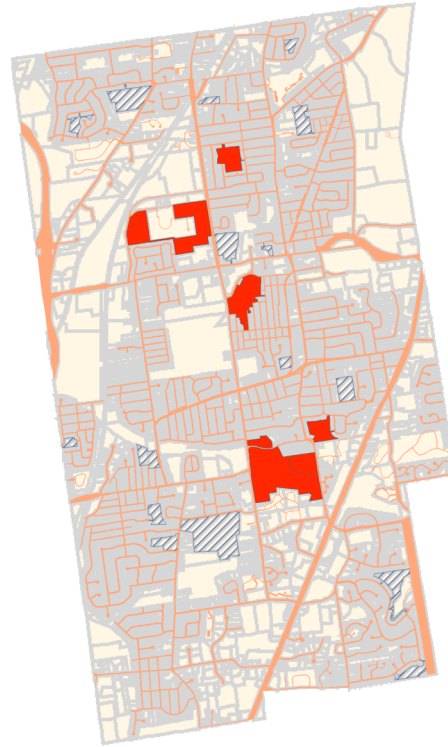
There is a poor distribution of picnic facilities throughout the Town. The school grounds do not have picnic facilities putting the onus on the neighborhood parks. However only a couple of them have a picnic table.

Athletic Facilities

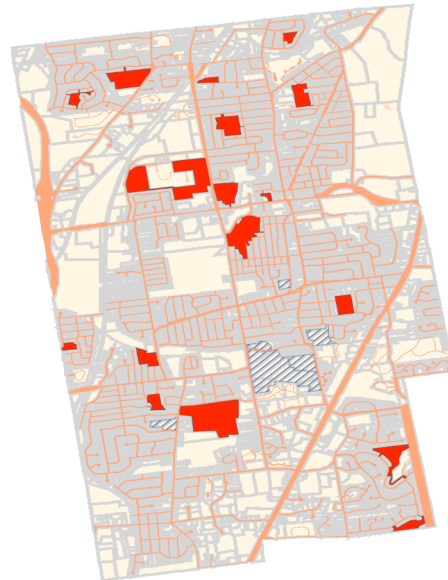
The distribution of athletic facilities is adequate since both the parks and the schools have facilities. The consultants have divided the athletic facilities into diamond fields, which represent dedicated baseball/softball diamonds; rectangular fields, which represent dedicated soccer, lacrosse, field hockey or football fields. The final category is open fields. These may have a backstop or base paths but contain no fences that preclude the multiple use of the fields.



Diamond Fields



Rectangular Fields



Open Play Area

Assessment of Existing Resources:

A key factor in assessing the operational and economic health of a park and recreation department is the current condition of the parks and facilities in relationship to a standard of sustainable practice. This standard considers the age of the existing park and facilities and assesses their condition in comparison to resources that have been properly maintained over their lifecycle.

The Park Grounds and Maintenance Division do an impressive job of maintaining the parks with the amount of resources available. The staff is mostly comprised of longer-term employees and thus knows what needs to be done. A less experienced and talented set of employees would quickly make it clear that the resources are much less than needed. The consultants have taken into account the level of resources available and address the impacts of the resources in a later section. This assessment looks at the resources in comparison to best practices.

Generally speaking the Newington Parks are poorly maintained. There is no consistent turf program established for the parks, equipment is aging and the lack of treatments for courts and similar facilities and amenities results in a more rapid deterioration over time. Rather than being excessively repetitious, the assessment will highlight areas that need to be addressed.

Turf Grass

One of the most enjoyable elements of a park for kids is being able to roll in the grass, and play sports or games in open fields. Most of the park turf areas, outside of designated athletic fields are uneven in grading, frequently muddy or wet, and do not have a systematic turf program in place. The soils are clay and that causes problems in all the parks, but properly graded, drained and managed the grassed areas of the parks could be an aesthetic and enjoyable element of the parks.

Dumping of Yard Trimmings

Many of the parks, particularly the neighborhood parks, are adjacent to housing. Most of the parks have become a dumping area for yard waste. While it may seem that yard waste would be a benefit to the natural processes in the parks that is seldom the case. Frequently, piles of trimmings rot rather than composting and may become a home for rats or other undesirable rodents. It may not technically be the role of the maintenance staff to remove such trash or to notify adjacent owners, but they are the ones who have to address the problems created.

Playgrounds

Playgrounds have become one of the most frequent sources of risk management claims against municipal governments across the country. Most of the playgrounds in the parks are old and outdated and considered unacceptable. Generally the structures are removed rather than leaving an attractive nuisance. These decisions are met with protest by parents of the children and demand for replacement apparatus, certainly a costly action to take. Newington has conducted a playground safety study and is systematically removing unsafe equipment and replacing it with appropriate playground features. These actions reflect good management of the process and provide the Town

with a new set of playgrounds in their parks. While all playgrounds deteriorate due to age, one key to playground safety is a weekly general inspection of each playground with all fasteners checked and tightened. On a monthly basis, the playgrounds should be given a detailed inspection and all problems fixed or repaired.

Drainage

As mentioned in the turf grass section the drainage of the parks is a major issue. Many of the playgrounds are in low areas that need to be raised. The wet soils can compact and dry to hardpan, creating unsafe condition. In some cases, open play areas have asphalt trails crossing them that prevent proper runoff. Detention basins are filled with debris and vegetation making them susceptible to failure and drainage ditches are eroding. Once again, these issues may not directly be the problem for the maintenance staff but it reflects on the parks.

Extruded Tree Roots

A number of the parks have tree varieties that have ground level root systems. This results in roots that are described as extruded, meaning they above the level of the ground, Where grass grow between the extruded roots or in areas where leaves can cover the roots in the fall the roots are a hazard resulting in ankle or fall related injuries. The best practice is to remove these trees and replace them with varieties that grown deeper roots. In the Newington parks many of the extruded root occurrences are older, large trees that are difficult and costly to take down. Filling the rooted area or even creating a large, contained-mulch area can provide the needed protection.

Courts

At some time in the past, some of the basketball/multiple-use courts were elevated to allow for drainage of the court surface. This is a perfectly acceptable practice but in some cases the result is erosion around the edge of the courts. This occurrence needs to be monitored to avoid creating a unsafe use conditions such as the one in the example provided.

Another aspect of court maintenance, other than the clay surfaced courts, is the systematic annual filling of cracks and a five-year schedule of repainting/resealing or resurfacing. These maintenance actions are not extremely expensive. Although they are time consuming, and may not seem a priority, they extend the life of the courts by about 50% over their lifecycle.

The clay tennis courts are a nice feature, but the Town must recognize the time and cost for clay courts are significantly greater than for other court surfaces.

Athletic Fields

Of all the park facilities the athletic fields get the greatest amount of maintenance activity. Unfortunately the soils and incidence of rainfall conspire to constrain the use of the fields. This is actually a good situation, because the clay soils would leave bare dirt if exposed to heavy repetitive use. The fields generally look good and have an adequate turf on them unless some group uses the fields when wet. Nevertheless the reality is that a lot of time and money is being spent for a very

meager return in terms of use. A systematic process of field renovations (i.e., replacement of soils and installation of tile drainage) is the only logical solution to maintain turf fields.

Swimming Pools

The two outdoor swimming pools in Newington have grown with the population of the town. Few can probably remember a time when the pools at Churchill and Mill Pond were not available for swimming. Unfortunately, that fact also indicates the age of the pools. According to the publication “Celebrating 50 Years,” a history of parks and recreation in Newington, Mill Pond Pool was built before 1960 and Churchill pool was opened in 1965. The expected life of a pool is about 40 years. Although both Churchill and Mill Pond are currently serviceable they have exceeded their expected life and the Town must face a decision about replacement in the near term future.

The indoor pool is located in a windowless, dim, uninviting and unattractive area of the High School. This means that the pool is not available for use during the day throughout the school year and in the summer no one wants to use the indoor pool when the outdoor pools are available. There are also some signs of corrosion that is common with indoor chlorine environments. Metal features such as doorframes and light switch covers need to be replaced with non-corrosive materials. The pool deck is also palling and needs to be refurbished.

Park Buildings

The primary park buildings are the Mortensen Community Center, the maintenance compound at the West Meadow Cemetery, the chapel, the Kellogg-Eddy House and appurtenances, the Kelsey House, the Deming Young Structures, the bath and pump-houses at Churchill and Mill Pond and the scorer’s/announcer’s, concession/storage buildings at Clem Lemire Park and Badger field. Of these buildings, the Park Grounds and Maintenance staff has been responsible for the maintenance compound, the two historic properties Kellogg-Eddy House and the Kelsey House, and the swimming related facilities at the outdoor pools.

The Town’s Facilities Maintenance group maintains the MCC. The sports associations maintain the athletic buildings. The Deming-Young House is under private reconstruction and the out buildings do not appear to be maintained by anyone.

As one might expect from a building that has been first a high school for twenty years and then a community center for the next 35 years, the MCC gymnasium and rooms are old, unattractive and in need of major upgrades. There are indications that the structure is also decaying and may need significant renovations to upgrade.

The athletic field buildings appear to be in good repair and no mention was made of the need for repairs or renovations. The historic structures are in poor repair and in need of major roof work to eliminate water leaks that are destroying the integrity of the windows and walls. The bathhouses and related structures are in varying condition, but at minimum need some paint, lighting and other

actions to improve the facilities. Others need updating for ADA compliance and roof repairs to stop leaks.

The Parks and Grounds staff has no trade people or other workers designated to work on buildings. The mechanic works on the pools as part of maintaining the chemical and filtration systems. Since the start of this study the maintenance for the Kellogg-Eddy House and the Kelsey House has been transferred to the Town Facilities Department.

Trails, Paths, Roads and Parking

Piper Brook Floodway is an open space trail that travels from Newington into West Hartford. There are many private ownerships of land along the floodway that need easements or other types of agreements before the trail can be fully developed or utilized.

The Twenty-Rod Road connection, Young Farm/Rockhole Brook Trail, and Old Cedar Mountain, Trail is overgrown and in need of significant trash cleanup as well as removal of brush and trees.

Most of the parking lots in the parks are crusher run stone or gravel. In some cases the sub-layer of clay causes uneven surfaces and rutting when the clay is wet. It also contributes to individuals using grassed areas and other non-graveled surfaces for parking. For the most part the parking areas are not well defined or the boundaries delineated. This is a significant problem at congested sites like Clem Lemire Park.

A number of parks show the effects of vehicular traffic on turf areas, using footpaths as an entry into the park grounds. These entries should be designed to allow pedestrians, including wheelchairs, but prevent vehicular access. This is usually a problem for the maintenance crews but needs to be done.